

APPLYING MILL'S UTILITARIAN ETHIC AND HIS
VIEW ON THE TYRANNY OF PUBLIC OPINION
TO THE MODERN GUN CONTROL DEBATE

by

Kyle Scott Prunty, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts
with a Major in Philosophy
December 2019

Committee Members:

Vincent Luizzi, Chair

Jo Ann Carson

Audrey McKinney

Janet Hale

Copyright

by

Kyle Scott Prunty

2019

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgment. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Kyle Scott Prunty, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For her consistent support in completing this project I would like to thank my wife, Marisa. For inspiring me to be a good example I would like to thank my two little boys. It seems like I started this program a lifetime ago. After an over 5-year hiatus between coursework and this project consisting of meeting my bride, having two children, and continuing a career, I have been able to return to the program to complete this last step with them beside me. It has been a much more rewarding journey since they have been a part of it. I would also like to thank my employer, Nu Edge Realty, for putting up with what has to be the most sporadic 9-year schedule in existence.

For the direct support and guidance on this project I would like to thank my committee members. I would specifically like to thank Dr. Luizzi for his patience, support, and ability to see clearly my ideas when, to me, they were an incoherent mess. I would like to thank Dr. McKinney for staying on even in retirement for this project and Dr. Carson for keeping me organized throughout. Together, my committee members accounted for a large portion of my undergraduate and graduate courses. I kept attending their classes because they are excellent teachers and I am grateful they were all willing to guide me on this project, as well.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
I. STUDY GROUNDED IN MILL’S UTILITARIAN APPROACH	3
Incorporating the Liberty Principle	5
II. APPLYING THE UTILITARIAN APPROACH TO THE INTERNET AND AUTOMOBILES	7
Part I. Internet Access & The Power of Communication	7
Harm of the Internet.....	8
Benefits of the Internet	11
Applying the Framework.....	16
Part II. The Automobile & The Power of Transportation	17
Harm of the Automobiles	18
Benefits of the Automobiles	22
Applying the Framework.....	24
Part III. Observations About This Evaluation	25
III. GUN OWNERSHIP AND THE FOG OF PUBLIC OPINION	29
Calls for The Elimination or Restriction of Guns	31
Misinformation Drives the Tyranny of Public Opinion	33
Misinformation About Harm.....	33
A Consideration for Compromise	46
Harm of Gun Violence.....	51
Benefits of Gun Ownership.....	56
Applying the Framework.....	61
Concluding Remarks.....	62

APPENDIX SECTION	64
REFERENCES	65

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this argument is to advance the conversation surrounding gun control in the United States. It examines the reasoning used in evaluating the degree to which we regulate our rights and actions by comparing the use and regulation of the internet, cars, and guns. A common consideration for imposing restrictive regulation is the prevention of harm. The philosopher J.S. Mill stands out, given his utilitarian ethic of promoting the greatest good for the greatest number as well as his liberty principle, which claims the only justification for restricting rights is the prevention of harm to others.

By investigating how these approaches can guide our reasoning around regulating rights and actions in our everyday lives, I explain how they lie at the foundation of our thinking about the use of the internet and cars, and should likewise serve as a guide when considering regulating guns. There is however, a significant obstacle that impedes accurate reasoning in the case of regulating guns. Misinformation and faulty reasoning are influencing public opinion about the harm and therefore regulation of guns. It is imperative to combat these obstacles in order to accurately apply Mill's liberty principle and his basic utilitarian approach to ethics.

The outcome of this argument is that we are able to place our thinking about gun control on a similar footing with how we think about internet and cars. Based on Mill's thinking, we ultimately recognize that this approach provides a reasonable

position about fair regulation, one that falls between the extremes of no regulation, which tolerates any activity, regardless of the harm it causes, and of complete restriction of people's freedom in the name of preventing harm. Along the way, I discuss current regulation, add my own thinking about the variables that figure into a calculation, including power, freedom, and responsibility. This framework allows us to evaluate social practices in a more informed way than either Mill's utilitarianism or his liberty principle allow.

Chapter 1

STUDY GROUNDED IN MILL'S UTILITARIAN APPROACH

Every instrument we possess has power to some degree. A car gets our belongings and us where we want to go with relative ease and at a minimal cost, but it can also kill a family of four in an instant. A computer can bring worlds together or be used to prey upon children. A hammer can be used to build a home or split a skull. It is not the fault of the car or the computer or the hammer when it is used to reach a nefarious or unfortunate end, whether the use of them is intentional, negligent or accidental.

In a free society, citizens are empowered to act as they choose. This power implies responsibility because power can be used for good or ill and is justified only if it is used for good. Power implies responsibility because power implies ability and ability creates choice. Restated, the conceptual framework involving freedom, power, and responsibility amounts to:

1. If you have freedom, then you have power

2. If you have power, then you have responsibility.

Therefore,

3. If you have freedom, then you have responsibility.

Let us investigate further how this line of reasoning obligates us to disincentivize harm.

Our choices as autonomous individuals lead to action. Action is how individuals use their freedom, and their actions can have multiple outcomes. Broadly, actions can have

good outcomes, bad outcomes, or outcomes with no perceivable effect. Bad outcomes are the result of bad actions. These bad actions are an abuse of freedom and can result in harm. Harm must be reduced or eliminated in order to preserve freedom. We have a responsibility to disincentivize harm. Therefore, if you have power you also have the responsibility to disincentivize harm. It is not necessary to restrict fully someone's freedom to choose some course of action to eliminate harm because harm is only one of several possible outcomes of an action that is a freely undertaken. Freedom is not the source of the harm; choice is. Furthermore, while we have the responsibility to disincentivize harm, we also have a responsibility to minimize the restriction of freedom in the name of preserving freedom.

This line of thinking provides a framework for evaluating actions and practices. It is utilitarian in nature, insofar as utilitarianism requires our creating the greatest good for the greatest number, with, in the thinking of classical utilitarianism, good being pleasure and bad being pain. Approaches related to this view speak of weighing of harms and benefits, costs and benefits, and good and bad consequences to determine right and wrong. In what follows, as we evaluate the Internet, automobiles, and guns, we do so using both the framework involving freedom, power, and responsibility and a form of utilitarianism that considers the harm and benefits of acts and practices.

Another point of intersection between my method of analysis and Mill's thinking is his Liberty Principle, which identifies harm to others as the only justification for restricting someone's liberty. Mill writes,

That principle is that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self-protection. That the only

purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant.¹

This is consistent with our framework for analysis in that disincentivizing harm is a principal reason for restricting someone's freedom.

Before we move on, let us comment on why this utilitarian approach of weighing harm and benefit is an especially effective way to determine what should be allowed in society. Consider Russell's insight that society is fraught with conflicting interests and what is good for one may not be for another. As Russell explains in his *A History of Western Philosophy*:

Ethics is necessary because men's desires conflict. The primary cause of conflict is egoism: most people are more interested in their own welfare than in that of other people. But conflicts are equally possible where there is no element of egoism. One man may wish everybody to be Catholic, another may wish everybody to be Calvinist. Such non-egoistic desires are frequently involved in social conflicts. Ethics has a twofold purpose: First, to find a criterion by which to distinguish good and bad desires and discourage such as are bad.²

This thinking aligns with the utilitarian nature of my approach because it is acknowledging the need to distinguish good and bad, as well as the need to discourage the bad. My approach is simply creating a more specific criterion of good and bad which has us consider harm and benefit and maintains it is the responsibility of society to discourage harm.

INCORPORATING THE LIBERTY PRINCIPLE

While the argument for understanding freedom and harm is simple, the difficult task put to both ethics and law is understanding and determining what is considered a

¹ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, INC., 1978, 9

² Bertrand Russell, *History Of Western Philosophy*, 10th ed. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964, 779-780

good, bad, or neutral outcome of an action. In the scope of law, harm is implied in a crime and thus, crimes are bad actions. However, bad actions go beyond the law and enter into the realm of ethics.

CHAPTER 2

APPLYING THE UTILITARIAN APPROACH TO THE INTERNET AND AUTOMOBILES

Part I. INTERNET ACCESS & THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION

The prevalence of the internet is so commonplace you can probably find a device to access it within minutes of where you are now. The internet has changed the world in unique and meaningful ways by allowing communication in seconds from around the world. It can bring people in remote areas an endless wealth of information, it has affected the way nearly every industry does business over the last 20 years, and is available at a very low cost to most citizens in the civilized world. The internet is a very powerful tool available to a very large portion of the world. The United States Census found in 2017 that “77% of [United States] households have a broadband subscription” and “62 percent of American households had ‘high connectivity,’ meaning they had three key computer and Internet items: a desktop or laptop, a handheld computer or smartphone, and a broadband Internet subscription.”³ The same study shows these percentages are even higher with people under the age of 65. In addition, there is very little government restriction on the use and content of the internet and the government even provides free internet access in many ways such as public libraries.

³ Camille Ryan and Jamie M. Lewis, "Computer And Internet Use In The United States: 2015.", Census.Gov, Last modified 2017
<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/acs/acs-37.pdf>.

As with any powerful tools available to the masses, it can be used for good and productive means, it can be used for mundane and meaningless things, and it can be used for nefarious and evil means. Without going into much depth, one can easily think of recent use of the internet for both good and mundane uses. Simply shooting an email to a friend, colleague or client, looking up the best restaurant option in your area to fit your craving, mindlessly scrolling through a social media feed to see what friends or acquaintances are doing or saying, or looking up a business's phone number on an iPhone, are all good or mundane uses of the internet and most Americans have probably done more than one of these things in the last 24 hours. The flip side is that bad people can do bad things with the very same tools.

HARM OF THE INTERNET

The national news story about the "Craigslist Killer" is an example of someone using the internet for harm. A 23-year-old medical student, Philip Markoff, had no criminal history, but was able to use the website, Craigslist.org, to arrange meetings with unsuspecting women to rob, assault or kill them. He was also found and caught largely based on tracking his emails. An even more sinister use of the internet is shown in a 2018 episode of *48 Hours – Hitman for Hire*⁴ where a man identified as "Yura" has created a website where people can hire a hitman to kill someone or apply to be a

⁴ Peter Van Sant, "'48 Hours' Disrupts Alleged Dark Web Hitmen In Potential Murder-For-Hire Plots", Cbsnews.Com, Last modified 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/48-hours-disrupts-alleged-dark-web-hitmen-in-potential-murder-for-hire-plots/>.

hitman for hire. The website is considered to be part of the Dark Web, which by definition is the internet being used for criminal activity.

In addition to the internet being used to aid in committing traditional crimes like murder and assault, the internet has paved the way for a whole new type of criminal activity called “Cyber Crime”. Cyber Crime can be anything from stealing online passwords to the hacking of a Fortune 500 company’s private servers. The US Department of Homeland Security has its own Cybersecurity division. On the Home Page it states:

Cyberspace and its underlying infrastructure are vulnerable to a wide range of risk stemming from both physical and cyber threats and hazards. Sophisticated cyber actors and nation-states exploit vulnerabilities to steal information and money and are developing capabilities to disrupt, destroy, or threaten the delivery of essential services.

There are also private cyber security companies that offer services for businesses and agencies large or small. The industry is so necessary and prevalent, you need only go to cybersecurityventures.com/cybersecurity-500-list/ to see a list of the industry’s top companies, or visit *Wired.com* to get up to date stories about the world of Cybersecurity.

The most common and well-known harmful use of the internet would have to be online predators, preying on children in online chat rooms. These stalkers and pedophiles use the internet to befriend a child, convince the child to meet, then engage or attempt to engage in lude or sexual acts with them. The practice is so prevalent you can find a story on any news website or easily google search ‘online predator’ to see page after page of stories. In Dateline NBC’s popular eye-opening show *To Catch a*

Predator, the show poses as a child online, plans a meeting with the online predator, and the show's camera crew then catches the predator attempting to meet with the fake child. There are countless stories and studies done about this harmful issue, but according to the *New England Journal of Public Policy Online Predators: Myth vs Realty*,⁵ it happens mostly in chat rooms, on social media, or in the chat feature of a multiplayer game, which are all places available to anyone with internet access regardless of age.

It must also be acknowledged that without the internet we would not have social media. Anyone who has ever used social media knows the potential for wasting time and increased anxiety. The ability to get into lengthy contentious arguments, stay up late scrolling through endless feeds, and the potential for missing out on something when you're not on social media, can all lead to many problems including health issues. There is even a small industry dedicated to educating the masses on just how detrimental social media can be to your health, life, and career. There are many cognitive and behavioral issues related to both children and adults due to overuse of computer devices. In addition, with social media being a relatively new element to society, scientists and specialists are still discovery new harmful ways social media causes harm in both measurable and immeasurable ways. For a more in-depth look at the harms of social media, See the Forbes article, *6 Ways Social Media Affects Our Mental Health*, written by PhD in Biopsychology and Behavioral Neuroscience, Alice G.

⁵ Janis Wolak et al., "Online Predators: Myth Versus Reality", *New England Journal Of Public Policy* 25, no. 1 (2013), <https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/03/health/online-predators-parents-partner/index.html&httpsredir=1&article=1646&context=nejpp>.

Walton, and *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*, by “Silicon Valley pioneer”, Jaron Lanier.

With all of these crimes, nefarious uses of the internet, drawbacks of social media use, and all of the harm caused to adults and children, how can we, as a society, continue to allow the use of the internet? If the internet didn't exist Cyber Crime and the Dark Web wouldn't exist. If the internet didn't exist a countless number of crimes against children would not have happened. Could there be ways to eliminate parts of the internet? Are there ways to regulated individuals' access to harmful elements of the internet? Do the benefits of internet access far outweigh the harms?

BENEFITS OF THE INTERNET

According to Kyle Gordons article on *Statista.com* there were an estimated 3.5 billion internet users worldwide in 2016 and the United States was third highest in the world with roughly 290 million internet users. That equates to roughly 45% of the world's population using the internet in 2016, while in the US it was roughly 95% of the population. In addition to usage, Gordon states, “In 2017, the retail e-commerce sales worldwide amounted to 2.3 trillion US dollars and e-retail revenues are projected to grow to 4.88 trillion US dollars in 2021.”⁶

⁶ Kyle Gordon, "Topic: Internet Usage Worldwide", *Www.Statista.Com*, Last modified 2019, <https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/>.

Hundreds of millions of people have the ability to access the internet and the vast majority choose not to use it in a harmful way. In addition, the ability to access the internet has both immeasurable value and immense measurable value. So, do the actions of the Craigslist Killer, websites like Hitman for Hire, the abundance of Cyber Crime and online predators, warrant the shutdown of the internet? They are terrible results of the internet and illustrate the potential for countless others to do harm as well and it is undeniable that these crimes would not have happened without the internet. We can look further into the risks and rewards of the internet by also considering what good things would not have happened without the internet.

The most commonly used things that would not exist without the internet are email and social media. The abundance of, and easy access to, the internet has enabled email and social media to be widely used. With email and social media, we have a level of communication greater than any time in history. Not only can we write or use video to communicate around the world, but we can also send large quantities of data as easily as we talk to each other. In addition, we can follow old and new friends lives and get knowledge and updates on their lives and interests -whether we care or not- that we would not otherwise have without the internet. There are other common and easy to use methods of communication also available to internet users seeking specific needs or markets. One of the oldest and most common such uses of the internet is online dating. Online dating industry leader, eHarmony, claims 40% of US adults use online dating and states:

There are 40 million Americans using online dating websites and those users range from young to old. Today, 27% of young adults report using online dating sites, which is up 10% from 2013, likely due to the influx of dating apps on smartphones. For those 55 to 64-year-olds that use online dating, there has been a 6% increase from 2013 to 2015.⁷

In addition, the online dating review website, Datingadvice.com states in a 2016 article

“7 facts about eHarmony’s success rate”⁸

1. 71% of Women, 69% of Men Meet Their Spouse on eHarmony Within a Year
2. 15 Million Matches a Day are Created on the Site
3. eHarmony is Responsible for Nearly 4% of U.S. Marriages
4. 542 People Get Married Every Day Because of eHarmony
5. 600,000+ eHarmony Couples Have Gotten Married
6. eHarmony Divorce Rate: 3.86% — National U.S. Average: 50%
7. 15,000 People a Day Take Their Questionnaire

While eHarmony is the industry leader in online dating, it is only one of dozens of online dating websites that have brought together several million Americans in long term relationships and marriages. These online dating websites use user data to match persons with other users to strike up a meeting. This formula-based method of gathering data and the communication among users would not exist without the use of the internet.

Another major industry that would not exist without the internet is

“Crowdfunding”. Explaining crowdfunding, Rob Solomon, *advisory.com*, CEO of GoFundMe, says "In the old paradigm you would give \$20 to somebody who needed help. In the new paradigm, you'll give \$20, you'll share that [online], and that could turn

⁷ Isabel Thottam, "10 Online Dating Statistics You Should Know (U.S.)", Eharmony.Com, Last modified 2018, <https://www.eharmony.com/online-dating-statistics/>.

⁸ Hailey Matthews, "Eharmony Success Rate (7 Surprising Stats)", Datingadvice.Com, Last modified 2016, <https://www.datingadvice.com/online-dating/eharmony-success-rate>.

into 10, 20, 50, or 100 people doing that. So, the \$20 could turn in hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars."⁹ This idea has inspired hundreds of crowdfunding websites, like GoFundMe, Kickstarter, and others, to help people raise money for upstart businesses, to pay for college or other projects. According to Solomon, "1 in 3 campaigns on GoFundMe are for medical bills." Some examples the article offers from GoFundMe:

A three-year-old boy with a rare genetic disorder that makes him susceptible to broken bones whose relatives have raised more than \$30,000 of their \$40,000 goal after the boy broke a bone as his mother was putting him in a car seat;

A South Carolina man with prostate cancer and no insurance who has raised more than \$85,000—well over his goal of \$50,000; and

A North Carolina harpist who lost her hearing after a traumatic brain injury who has raised nearly all the money she needs for procedures not covered by her insurance.¹⁰

In 2017, Houston Texans Defensive lineman JJ Watt used his own social media platforms to drive donations to the crowdfunding website YouCaring.com, to raise a record-setting amount of money for the victims of Hurricane Harvey. According to an August 2018 article on Philanthropynewsdigest.org:

The Justin J. Watt Foundation has announced that the online fundraising campaign set up by Houston Texans star J.J. Watt to assist people affected by Hurricane Harvey has raised a total of \$41.6 million over the past year.

Through the Houston Flood Relief Fund crowdfunding page, the effort — which was launched with a goal of \$200,000 — raised more than \$37 million from 209,000 donors by its original September 15, 2017, deadline. Money continued to come in past the deadline, however, making it the largest crowdsourced fundraiser in history.¹¹

This story is an even greater example of the power of the internet because Watt actually started the campaign while the team was stranded, because of Hurricane Harvey, in

⁹ "1 In 3 Gofundme Campaigns Is For Medical Bills, CEO Says", Advisory.Com, Last modified 2018, <https://www.advisory.com/daily-briefing/2018/07/10/gofundme>.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ "J.J. Watt's Harvey Crowdfunding Effort Raised \$41.6 Million", Philanthropy News Digest (PND), Last modified 2018, <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/j.j.-watt-s-harvey-crowdfunding-effort-raised-41.6-million>.

Dallas for a preseason road game. He used his cell phone to launch the campaign via video from a football practice field using social media.

Another unique way the internet has brought people together is through people-finding websites like Trustify.com, that help people locate long lost relatives, as well as the very popular family tree websites like Ancestry.com, MyHeritage.com, and Genealogy.com, that help users identify living and deceased family members through public records and other data sources to help them create family trees and find out family history. In addition, users can access each other's trees in an attempt to collaborate research. These websites allow users to input their own data and use public data compiled by government organizations and others from any computer with internet access.

With the freedom to access the internet people have been able to accomplish many extraordinary things as well as communicate and share content for both business and personal reasons. With this unique and powerful tool, the vast majority of users have chosen to be good and productive and use the internet to make their lives better. Given the examples provided of how the internet can also be used for harm we must acknowledge that the power available to people poses a threat when used irresponsibly. Should the internet be banned or highly regulated because of the nefarious actions of a small percentage of users? If one child is spared from harm by the internet being eliminated, is it worth it? Could the internet still be productive if only used by the government or by subscribers such as large companies that pay for its use and have its activities watched and heavily regulated? Could this potentially eliminate all the cyber-

crime and the dark web while also not allowing criminals to use the internet to prey on children or defraud people? Using the framework you can see how the freedom to use the internet has power in that it is an excellent tool for communication and many other things, but it can easily be used to harm others. Therefore, we as citizens have a responsibility to use that ability for our benefit while also being vigilant that some may use it for harm. We must protect our access to the internet by doing what we can to eliminate the harmful elements it can produce.

APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

When you get on the internet you are making a choice to browse or interact online. The choices you make while online are your actions. You can search, game, communicate, transact, etc., thoughtfully and productively, or nefariously and illegally, or anywhere in-between. You can raise funds for a good cause, meet your future spouse, answer work emails, argue with strangers on social media, scam innocent people out of money, or many other things. As a society we recognize the potential outcomes of the use of the internet and have come up with and agreed to laws and regulations on how transactions can be executed, how data can be collected, and many other things, and many online companies have come up with their own rules and regulations pertaining to what can be done or said on their websites. These rules are in place to do what can be done to make the internet as safe as possible. The rules disincentivize the harmful ways a person can use the internet. When anyone preys on

an innocent person online to defraud or hurt them, it is the action of that perpetrator as a result of their choices that created the harm, not the internet. The harms of the internet are very real, but the benefits far exceed them.

Part II. THE AUTOMOBILE & THE POWER OF TRANSPORTATION

The importance of transportation in the United States cannot be overstated. According to the US Department of Transportation (US DOT), the personal automobile is by far the dominant means of transportation in the US and has been for decades. According to the US DOT Bureau of *Transportation Statistics 2017* Annual Report ¹², “Government, businesses, private individuals, and nongovernmental organizations owned and operated about 264 million motor vehicles in 2015” and there are “Nearly 4.2 million miles of roads” in the United States. Ever since the invention of the automobile big cities and small towns have seemed to get closer together because Americans have been able to travel farther at a lower cost. This ability has given regular citizens the power to reach new markets for commerce. There is also very little restriction on people’s ability to drive automobiles. To drive on public roads, you must be of a certain age, have a license, obey traffic laws, and have the vehicle inspected annually. While there are laws and regulations surrounding the use of automobiles and a license can be revoked, most laws and regulations are in the interest of public safety and collecting data, and do not restrict many adults from driving. Anyone can ride in an automobile and even drive on private roads. In addition to automobiles becoming more

¹² U.S. Department of Transportation, *Transportation Statistics Annual Report 2017*, Washington, DC: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2017.

prevalent and affordable, they have also become larger and faster as well as having more advanced technology both in the vehicle operations and availability to the user while driving. Much of the technology has gone to safety features both in the vehicle's ability to withstand or react to an accident as well as features that give the driver better vision and awareness. Those safety features are needed because auto accidents can be fatal; however, the added technology can be distracting for drivers.

HARM OF AUTOMOBILES

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 37,461 people were killed in 2016 either by, or while in, a vehicle or motorcycle. In addition, over 3.1 million were injured by, or while in, a vehicle or motorcycle ¹³. The National Statistics show that in 2016 there was an average of 1.18 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled or 11.59 fatalities per 100,000 population, as well as 99 Injured persons per 100 million vehicle miles traveled or 973 injured persons per 100,000 population. It is important to note that all of the injury and fatality numbers have steadily decreased over the decades of automobile use, even as use has increased. In 1990 there was an average of 2.06 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, in 1980 the average was 3.35 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled and in 1970 the average was 4.74 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.

¹³ See Appendix A

In addition to the physical harm caused by automobile use, pollution is another major harm. The US DOT states “Transportation is the second largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), accounting for 27.0 percent of total U.S. emissions in 2015.” This includes more than just automobiles, but the report also states “The highway mode continues to dominate transportation energy use, accounting for 61.6 percent of total transportation energy use.” These facts are exclusively about the pollution caused by the use of vehicles, but there is more to consider. Another conclusion of the study states “Transportation continues to rely almost entirely on petroleum to move people and goods. However, the sector’s dependence has decreased from a peak of 97.3 percent in 1978 to 92.2 percent in 2016.”¹⁴ The added harmful factor, that may be unmeasurable as it pertains to automobile use, is the harm to the environment caused by the petroleum industry. Though not all petroleum goes to automobile use, automobile use is certainly a major driver to petroleum production. A lower demand for petroleum would certainly lead to less production of it, and thus, less pollution. These statistical harms involve data for accidents and unintended consequences, but one must also consider a machine weighing thousands of pounds that can easily travel 80 miles per hour can also be used as a weapon.

On July 14th 2016, Bastille Day in Nice, France, a large cargo truck was used to kill 86 people and wound hundreds more. A few months later a similar attack happened in Berlin, Germany:

¹⁴ Ibid, 7-1

The Berlin killings appear to have been modelled on the Bastille Day truck attack in Nice, a tactic that has become a focus of propaganda by Islamic State over the past month. In terms of both its chosen target and method, the Berlin attack has echoes of the slaughter brought to the French coastal city in July by a Tunisian-born French resident.

At least 12 people died and dozens were injured on Monday night when a lorry was driven into a Christmas market in the centre of the German capital. The chancellor, Angela Merkel, said on Tuesday it had to be assumed “we are dealing with a terrorist attack”.¹⁵

Truck attacks on civilians have become more common over the last few years¹⁶. In an October 2017 Vox.com article titled, The New York attack shows why trucks are now the terrorist weapon of choice, Alex Ward writes:

On Tuesday afternoon, Sayfullo Saipov, a 29-year-old from Uzbekistan who came to the United States in 2010, drove a rented Home Depot truck into a pedestrian and bike path in Lower Manhattan, killing eight people and injuring 11.

Although police have not yet established any ties between the attacker and a larger terrorist group such as ISIS or al-Qaeda, the method of attack mimics other ISIS-directed and inspired attacks around the world in recent years, including in Nice, France, and London.

As Europe has learned only too well and Americans are now coming to understand, these kinds of attacks are notoriously difficult to prevent because it’s hard for authorities to know if an individual will slam a vehicle into a crowd of people. Indeed, that’s in large part why terror groups — particularly ISIS — encourage their followers to use this method of attack. Which means that we’re very likely to see more of these kinds of attacks in the coming years.¹⁷

The same type of Home Depot truck can be easily rented by anyone with a drivers license and a \$50 deposit. Ward goes on to list 5 similar attacks using automobiles in a 14-month span, including the attacks in Nice and Berlin, along with two in London and another in Barcelona.

¹⁵ Julian Borger and Ewen MacAskill, "Truck Attacks In Berlin And Nice Reflect Change In Islamic State Tactics", The Guardian, Last modified 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/20/truck-attacks-in-berlin-and-nice-reflect-change-in-isis-tactics>.

¹⁶ CNN Library, "Terrorist Attacks By Vehicle Fast Facts", CNN, Last modified 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/03/world/terrorist-attacks-by-vehicle-fast-facts/index.html>.

¹⁷ Alex Ward, "The New York Attack Shows Why Trucks Are Now The Terrorist Weapon Of Choice", Vox, Last modified 2017, <https://www.vox.com/2017/10/31/16587868/new-york-city-attack-truck-october-31>.

A unique and dangerous element to driving automobiles is road rage. A WebMD article titled The Root Cause of Road Rage discusses how common road rage is and how it leads to “aggressive driving”, a major cause of accidents:

One study estimates that more than half of all drivers have experienced a surge of road rage at some point, although not all bang into the offender's rear bumper, pull a pistol, or hurl a helpless puppy into oncoming traffic. Still, tens of thousands of accidents happen each year because of aggressive driving, which is also a leading cause of death for young children.

It goes on to explain how heavy traffic causes stress and aggression because drivers don't see other drivers as people the way they would in a setting like a long line at a store.

Ava Cadell, PhD, a psychologist and instructor at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco, agrees. "The heavy metal of a car is a safe haven. Road ragers don't think about the consequences or even about other people on the road as real people with real families."¹⁸

Road rage can cause normal people to do things they normally would not. In order to give a real-world example of road rage, I simply Google searched 'road rage' to find the most recent incident of it in the news and found this article from the morning I am writing this:

A former nurse from Missouri has been charged with murder after a road rage incident turned deadly and she ran her fellow driver over when she got out of her car. Elizabeth McKeown, 46, boasted to cops that she's 'tricked' victim Barbara Foster, 57, by pretending to be 'nice' to lure her out of her car. She'd then put her foot down and 'slammed into her and cut her in half.'¹⁹

¹⁸ Jean Lawrence, "Road Rage Root Cause", Webmd, accessed 31 October 2019, <https://www.webmd.com/women/features/root-cause-of-road-rage#1>.

¹⁹ Jessica Finn, "Former Nurse Charged With Murder Over Brutal Road-Rage Killing", Mail Online, Last modified 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6455779/Former-nurse-charged-murder-brutal-road-rage-killing.html>.

The article states McKeown had no criminal history and that “McKeown, a mother who lost her nursing license after being caught stealing prescription painkillers, was arrested and charged with first-degree murder.”²⁰

One of the safest ways to travel, according to the NHTSA, is by school bus. The NHTSA claims:

Students are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a bus instead of traveling by car. That’s because school buses are the most regulated vehicles on the road; they’re designed to be safer than passenger vehicles in preventing crashes and injuries; and in every State, stop-arm laws protect children from other motorists.²¹

The NHTSA also states that while by bus is the safest way for a K-12 student to travel, roughly 4-6 children still die each year on school buses. It’s also important to note that most injuries and fatalities associated with school buses are related to students getting on and off buses, not riding in them.

After considering all the deaths and injuries due to automobile accidents, the consistent use of automobiles in terrorist attacks, the pollution automobiles and the industries associated with them cause, and many more harms not mentioned, how can we possibly justify keeping automobiles, and specifically individual use of automobiles, as the dominant means of transportation? Does the benefit far outweigh the harm?

BENEFITS OF AUTOMOBILES

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ National Highway Safety Administration, "School Bus Safety", NHTSA, Last modified 2019, <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/school-bus-safety>.

In a 2013 Census Survey titled, “Who Drives to Work? Commuting by Automobile in the United States: 2013” the study opens with:

The automobile has played a fundamental role in shaping where we live and how we get around. It has influenced the form and density of our communities and expanded the geographic range of daily travel. Nationally, the private automobile is the predominant form of transportation for work and other travel purposes. In 2013, about 86 percent of all workers commuted to work by private vehicle, either driving alone or carpooling. In recent years, the percentage of workers who commute by private vehicle remained relatively stable after decades of consistent increase.²²

In addition to the basic necessity of getting to and from work every day, Americans use their automobiles for everything from going to the grocery store, eating out, perusing a new neighborhood, or traveling long distances to see family or friends. In addition to the observable everyday impact of automobiles, the Center for Automotive Research states in a 2010 report that “The auto industry is one of the most important industries in the United States. It historically has contributed 3 – 3.5 percent to the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The industry directly employs over 1.7 million people” and “Approximately 4.5 percent of all U.S. jobs are supported by the strong presence of the auto industry in the U.S. economy.”²³ So not only do automobiles have a positive daily impact on American’s lives, they are a staple of the greater US economy. The automobile and the auto industry have an enormous positive impact on society.

It’s easy to see and understand the enormous benefits when people have the ability to drive an automobile, and the vast majority choose to use it in a productive or

²²Brian McKenzie, *Who Drives To Work? Commuting By Automobile In The United States: 2013* Washington, DC: United States Census Bureau, 2015.

²³ Kim Hill, Debra Menk and Adam Cooper, "Contribution Of The Automotive Industry To The Economies Of All Fifty State And The United States | Center For Automotive Research", Center For Automotive Research, Last modified 2017, <https://www.cargroup.org/publication/contribution-of-the-automotive-industry-to-the-economies-of-all-fifty-state-and-the-united-states/>.

non-harmful way. In addition, the ability to drive an automobile has both immeasurable value and immense measurable value, even when compared to the over 37,000 people killed and over 3 million injured annually. Using the formula described in my initial argument, you can see how freedom to drive has power in that it is an excellent tool for transportation and many other things. Nevertheless, it can easily be used to harm others. Therefore, we as citizens have a responsibility to use that ability for our benefit while also being vigilant that some may use it for harm. We must protect the benefits of driving by doing what we can to eliminate the harm it can produce.

APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

When you get behind the wheel of a car you are making a choice to drive. The choices you make while driving determine your actions. You can drive carefully, casually, or recklessly. You can reach your destination safely without endangering others, you can piss off fellow travelers and be a nuisance on your journey, or you can cause a wreck and end lives. As a society we recognize the potential outcomes of the use of automobiles and have come up with and agreed to laws and regulations pertaining to who can drive one, what type can be driven and how it can be driven. These rules are in place to do what can be done to make driving as safe as possible. The rules discourage the harmful ways a driver can use a car. When you or any person drives recklessly and harms or kills another driver or pedestrian, it is the actions of the person driving as a result of their choices that created the harm, not the vehicle. Once again, the harms are very real, but the benefits far exceed them.

Part III. OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

When these two issues are considered objectively, in the context of harm vs benefit, we can see that both the use of the internet and the automobile have the potential for devastating outcomes. We can also see that those devastating outcomes, while they happen every day, are outliers when considering the amount of use associated with each. In addition, we can easily see the benefits related to the use of each. As previously stated, Mill believed in the greatest good for the greatest number, and acknowledged that the few must sometimes be expendable in the name of the good of the many. As a society, Americans accepts over 37,000 deaths and 3 million injuries associated with driving or riding in automobiles a year and have accepted much higher numbers in years and decades past. No one would argue against doing what is possible to reduce that number and, in fact, as previously stated, that number has gradually reduced over the years. However, we do not have a public outcry to eliminate automobiles. We don't even have a public outcry to eliminate particular types of automobiles that are faster or more dangerous. We also do not have a public outcry to eliminate the internet for the same reason. Even as the internet is in its toddler stage of development, its various forms and various industries and companies that comprise it wrestle with how it should be used, regulated, and made available. However, no one is calling for its prohibition and few even for restrictions. The benefits clearly outweigh the harms. These issues, according to Mill and the utilitarian ethic, would be considered properly adjudicated.

We can see this approach as a mid-way position between the extremes of abolition of some practice to avoid harm or providing no regulation and allowing harm to come as it may. At the first extreme, if you eliminate automobiles to save the roughly 40K lives and 3 million injuries annually, you must give up the immense access to transportation and all of its benefits. Likewise, if you eliminate the internet to potentially save the lives of countless adults and children (in many different ways) and eliminate the billions of dollars scammed annually from companies and individuals, you must give up the numerous benefits of the internet. As we will see in the next chapter, by parallel reasoning, if you make it illegal to own guns to potentially eliminate the roughly 11K gun related deaths and nearly 60k other crimes involving guns each year, you must give up the at least 500K instances a year where homes were defended legally with a firearm, as well as the fear of a defensive use of a firearm that tempers the boldness of criminals and would-be criminals. Quite evidently, one need not have to completely eliminate a practice to reduce or eliminate the harm it causes, and any universal elimination is Draconian and unnecessary. The other extreme of providing no regulation of known and predictable harms is equally problematic, insofar as harm is undesirable and there are means to curtail it far short of total elimination of the practice. This is where a utilitarian approach surfaces as an effective third alternative. When an individual chooses to use the internet or an automobile for nefarious means, that individual can lose access to the internet or lose a license to drive, much as a felon cannot possess a firearm. Through our laws, society takes power away from those individuals who abuse their power in an effort to reduce and disincentivize harm.

However, it must be acknowledged that a free society has to accept the bad actions of the few as a consequence of freedom and often those consequences are tragic. It is also essential that citizens understand that the level of a society's freedom is directly connected to its level of responsibility. When citizens give up responsibility, they are also giving up freedom.

In our discussion of the Internet and automobiles, we saw how a utilitarian approach allowed us to recognize how one's power and freedom may justifiably be curtailed in the name of prevention of harm to others. It is the claim of this argument that misinformation and faulty reasoning in the domain of public opinion impedes a cogent utilitarian analysis and that the error and confusion should be cleared away if we are to discuss effectively where utilitarian thinking takes us with regard to gun control. Mill himself was concerned with the harmful effect of public opinion as a form of what he described as the tyranny of the majority:

Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough; there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling, against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them;²⁴

Democracy is the establishment of power in the hands of the people to eliminate the tyranny of one or the few, but itself creates the opportunity for both the tyranny of the majority and the tyranny of public opinion, albeit through more difficult and lengthy means. It is both in the identification of and fight against the *tyranny of public opinion* to which this portion of the argument now turns. To understand the tyranny of public

²⁴ *On Liberty*, 4.

opinion and how to combat it, we will take the highly divisive issue of gun control a step further. To combat this form of tyranny, individuals must be educated in the nature of the methods used, be equipped to identify them, and through discourse, show their faults in order to guide the tide of public opinion into rational waters. It could also be argued that when society begins to allow fractional implementations through law based on tyrannical public opinion it can result in a gradual loss of freedom. The harm will never be fully eliminated, and thus can potentially result in a never-ending call for more restriction, reduction or regulation.

Accepting responsibility means we must occasionally confront the uncomfortable truths and inseparable relationships of the ideals and consequences that hold the threads of our society together while also making it special. We must accept that conflict is necessary for progress, that caring makes us vulnerable, and that freedom must endure tragedy. An inconvenience of freedom will always be present because while we have a responsibility to disincentive harm, we must be diligent in when and how to do so. A predominant aim of this argument is to better equip individuals in understanding the root elements of freedom, identify its opponents, and combat their efforts with reason. The utilitarian method is essential in the role of a just government. It must govern for the many while not trampling the few, but must also accept that harm to some individuals will occur. All theories of governing have flaws. This inherent utilitarian flaw must be understood and endured by citizens to become the strength of a democratic society. This is done by accepting the responsibility of freedom.

Chapter 3: GUN OWNERSHIP AND THE FOG OF PUBLIC OPINION

In contrast to both automobiles and the internet, most people do not see or use guns on a daily basis, with the exception of in law enforcement, outdoor jobs like park rangers or hunting guides, and most military personnel. However, though guns are not seen or used by most people daily, they are present and serving a purpose. When leaving your neighborhood for work in the morning you can see your neighbor's vehicle in the driveway and possibly see the name of their WIFI network on your iPhone as you drive by. However, you cannot see or know if they have a firearm in their home, nor if they have a home security system. You may patronize a few retail stores throughout your day and the owner or cashier may have a gun within reach that you cannot see and don't know about, similar to a bank teller alarm. Throughout the course of your day you may pass by or be near a police officer or security guard and never think to look at their service weapon or be aware that they probably have a shotgun in their police vehicle. In an everyday setting such as work, the grocery store, out to lunch, or walking in a crowd, you won't see or be aware of a citizen with a concealed carry license carrying a firearm, the same way you don't know how many security cameras you pass. Just as most people cannot know how many vehicles or WIFI networks they are around in a given day because there are too many to count and they are so commonplace, they also cannot know how many firearms they are in the presence of on a given day, because they often are not visible. Nonetheless, firearms are consistently present.

According to a 2017 Pew Research Center study,²⁵ 30% of U.S. citizens personally own a gun, while 69% of people say they do not own a gun. Of that 69%, 36% say they could see themselves owning a gun in the future and 33% say they could never see themselves owning a gun. In addition to the 30% of U.S. citizens who personally own a gun, 11% of people say they live with someone who owns a gun, making 41% of U.S. households “gun-owning”. An article pertaining to the survey states:

The survey finds that Americans have broad exposure to guns, whether they personally own one or not. At least two-thirds have lived in a household with a gun at some point in their lives. And roughly seven-in-ten – including 55% of those who have never personally owned a gun – say they have fired a gun at some point. Today, three-in-ten U.S. adults say they own a gun, and an additional 36% say that while they don’t own one now, they might be open to owning a gun in the future. A third of adults say they don’t currently own a gun and can’t see themselves ever doing so.²⁶

The number of guns per capita in the U.S. is the highest in the world. Multiple surveys and estimates reveal that there are roughly 101 guns per 100 citizens in the U.S., basically a gun per person. Considering only 30% of U.S. citizens own a gun we can infer from the Pew Study that if of that 30%, just under 1/3 say they only own one firearm, then there are many gun owners that own many guns. Of the 2/3 of remaining gun owners about half say they own between 2-4 firearms, while just over a half state they own 5 or more. Several sources estimate that about 3% of gun owners own about 50% of all guns, while another article estimates that 5% of gun owners own 65% of all guns. Both could easily be seen as fair estimates.

²⁵ Kim Parker, "Guns In America: Attitudes And Experiences Of Americans", Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, Last modified 2017, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/06/22/americas-complex-relationship-with-guns/>.

²⁶ John Gramlich and Katherine Schaeffer, "7 Facts About Guns In The U.S.", Pew Research Center, Last modified 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/22/facts-about-guns-in-united-states/>.

Now, you the reader, think about the last time you've fired a gun (if ever). Think of the last time you've seen a gun fired in person. And lastly, think about the last time you've seen a gun in person. Now, think about the most recent time you've heard an argument or outcry, on television or social media, for the restriction of guns.

CALLS FOR THE ELIMINATION OR RESTRICTION OF GUNS

In a 2018, NY Times Op-Ed, titled John Paul Stevens: Repeal the Second Amendment,²⁷ retired associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, John Paul Stevens, lit both the gun-control and gun-rights advocates ablaze. In his article, Stevens, moved by the recent public marches around the country demanding stricter gun laws, says, "But the demonstrators should seek more effective and more lasting reform. They should demand a repeal of the Second Amendment." He then goes on to state his reasoning:

Concern that a national standing army might pose a threat to the security of the separate states led to the adoption of that amendment, which provides that "a well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." Today that concern is a relic of the 18th century.

In addition to Justice Stevens call for the repeal of the 2nd amendment there have been many demands for the restriction of the sale and purchase as well as calls for the confiscation of many types of firearms. These demands were largely by citizen organizations and small groups, as you would expect of numerous laws and ideas, until recently. El Paso Congressman and Presidential Primary Candidate, Robert 'Beto'

²⁷ John Paul Stevens, "Opinion | John Paul Stevens: Repeal The Second Amendment", Nytimes.Com, Last modified 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/opinion/john-paul-stevens-repeal-second-amendment.html>.

O'Rourke said, on Sept 12th 2019, on the Presidential Primary national debate stage, "Hell, yes, we're going to take your AR-15, your AK-47...We're not going to allow them to be used against fellow Americans anymore." While it is not clear how far O'Rourke is willing to go with this statement, he is at least advocating the forced buy-back of particular firearms. He specifically refers to AR-15 and AK-47 in his debate statement, two rifles we will discuss later in this argument, but alludes to the possibility of more. The third major restriction recently proposed is the *Assault Weapons Ban of 2019*. This bill, sponsored by Sen Diane Feinstein, is a second rendition of a similar 2013 bill, also proposed by Feinstein, and is loosely based on the actual *Assault Weapons Ban* (1994) bill that was law for a decade from 1994-2004. It is a noteworthy attempt at restricting gun rights because the details and language of the bill are even more restrictive than the original Assault Weapons Ban that was allowed to expire (according to its own sunset provision) in large part because its details and language were overly restrictive and arbitrary. We will also discuss these bills later in this argument. One action that needs to be noted and is not a call for, but an actual elimination of rights, is President Trump's recent ban on bump stocks. This measure does not itself do much in the way of changing guns, but it does set a potentially dangerous precedent. By arbitrarily banning a gun accessory, President Trump has established a path for gun restriction through executive action.

Justice Stevens, Congressman O'Rourke, and Senator Feinstein's concern about firearms is understandable as they can be used for harm. Though most firearm usage in the United States is recreational and professional, the primary purpose of a gun is to kill.

The last portion of this argument will show how, in the case of gun control vs gun rights, the tyranny of public opinion attempts to tip the scales in favor of gun control while the evidence shows the gun rights argument is far stronger. This conclusion will then illuminate how difficult and important a citizen's responsibility is to maintaining freedom in the face of public opinion.

MISINFORMATION DRIVES THE TYRANNY OF PUBLIC OPINION

A major element in discussions involving guns and gun violence that we don't see in discussions involving automobiles or internet related harms is misinformation. As stated, faulty reasoning is to blame for much of the confusion surrounding the gun control argument. The reason for much of the faulty reasoning is that sound conclusions are based on good premises and good premises are based on good information. A root cause and useful tool of the tyranny of public opinion is misinformation. Misinformation creates bad premises and thus faulty reasoning.

MISINFORMATION ABOUT HARM

Many pro-gun control activists state gun statistics that, while they may be correct, are misleading to the main argument associated with guns. It is correct and commonly stated that there are 30-33k gun deaths each year in the US. What is lacking in this statistic is what makes up the term *gun deaths*. According to

EverytownResearch.org, The American Psychological Association, and others, there are roughly 22,000 suicides by firearm each year which are roughly 2/3 of all gun deaths.²⁸

²⁹ There are also roughly 500-700 accidental deaths by firearm each year. The more precise way of stating gun deaths for the argument against gun violence would be to state deaths in terms of gun violence related deaths, which is around 11K annually. Homicides make up roughly three quarters of that total at around 8K annually.

Misleading claims about school shootings are both in the overall number of occurrences and what is meant by "school shooting". A school shooting can be anything from a gun going off in a car in the school parking lot to an actual Active Shooter situation. The number of reported occurrences has also been disputed. NPR put out the findings in 2018 of a national report:

This spring the U.S. Education Department reported that in the 2015-2016 school year, "nearly 240 schools ... reported at least 1 incident involving a school-related shooting." The number is far higher than most other estimates.

But NPR reached out to every one of those schools repeatedly over the course of three months and found that more than two-thirds of these reported incidents never happened. Child Trends, a nonpartisan nonprofit research organization, assisted NPR in analyzing data from the government's Civil Rights Data Collection.

We were able to confirm just 11 reported incidents, either directly with schools or through media reports.³⁰

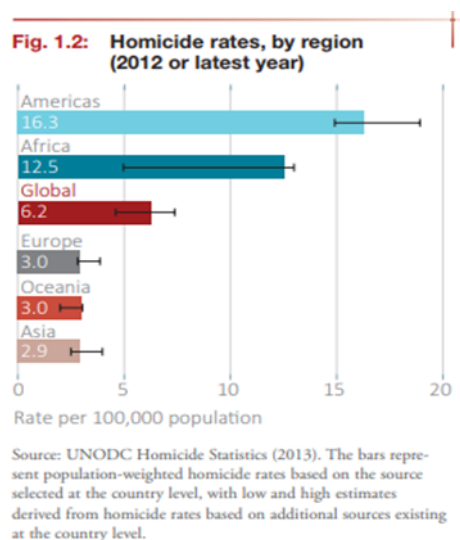
²⁸ "Firearm Suicide In The United States", Everytownresearch.Org, Last modified 2019, <https://everytownresearch.org/firearm-suicide/>.

²⁹ *American Psychological Association Resolution On Firearm Violence Research And Prevention* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014.

³⁰ Anya Kamenetz, "The School Shootings That Weren't", Npr.Org, Last modified 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/08/27/640323347/the-school-shootings-that-werent>.

Findings like these further convolute the argument on gun violence and serve as a reminder to everyone that while facts are paramount in understanding any issue, claims must be vetted before being considered facts.

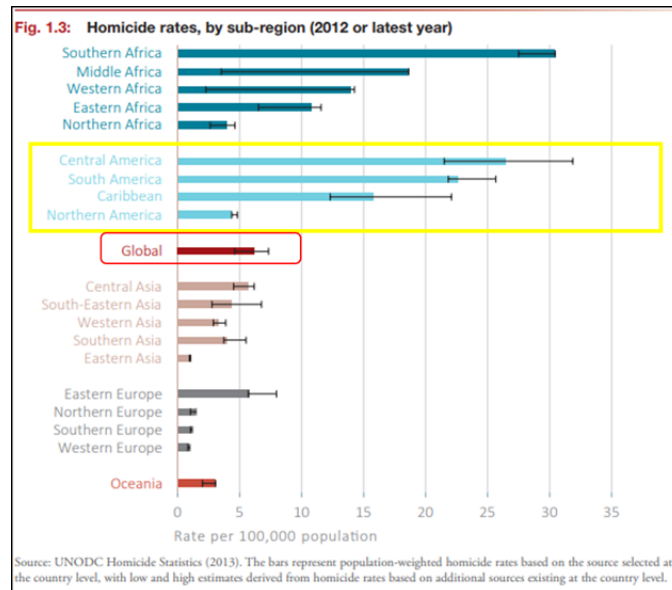
Another misleading claim echoed in the media is that America has the highest murder rate in the world. This argument is often backed up by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) data³¹ that breaks the world into 5 regions. The regions are: Americas, Africa, Oceania, Europe and Asia. The data is shown in number of crimes per 100,000 population and states the Global average at 6.2. The Americas have the highest murder rate at 16.3 per 100,000:



However, when broken down by sub-region, it is easy to see that South and Central America have extremely high homicide rates, the Caribbean is well above the Global average, and North America is below the Global average. The “America” that is being portrayed as the highest homicide rate in the world, should be more accurately

³¹ UNODC *Global Study on Homicide 2013* (United Nations publication, Sales No.14.IV.1).

described as “The Americas” and state that it is a region consisting of the two continents of North and South America, or the 4 UNODC sub-regions below:



The homicide rates are important to note for two reasons. First, they are not gun statistics, and second, the gun ownership rates in the Americas sub-regions are reversed, with North America having the highest gun ownership rate (because of the United States) while South and Central America have some of the lowest gun ownership rates in the world. Two important notes on the South and Central regions are that they have very high poverty rates and gang violence rates. Many stories associated with the gang violence in Central and South America show how the gangs will create gun-like weapons, fashioning things together like caulking guns, nail guns and scrap metal, and powering them with things like CO₂, or propane. So, despite the lack of resources or manufactured guns, these populations still have among the highest homicide rates in the world.

In analyzing articles in support of gun control we can identify the elements used to sway opinion, in opposition to facts. The first major element of which is the inflation of harm through false or misinformation, the second major element is the exclusion of benefits. In the Berkley article, *Political Philosophy and the Gun Control Debate: What would Bentham, Mills, and Nozick have to say?*³², the author applies the utilitarian ideas of Mill (misspelled in the article's title) and Bentham to the issue of Gun Control. The argument first notes the Harm Principle and states:

Applying the Harm Principle, the general stance is that guns produce more harm than happiness or social utility. First, and foremost, guns cost lives. Two out of three homicides, half of all suicides, and a third of all robberies are committed with guns. In the United States, the total number of handgun deaths from 1980 to 2006 exceeds 32,000 per year, according to UPenn's Health System. Additionally, the fiscal costs of gun injuries are disadvantageous in the utilitarian calculus. According to the CDC, firearm related deaths cost the United States health care system \$37 billion, and nonfatal gunshot wounds cost another \$3.7 billion in 2005 alone. This means that the taxpayer money that has gone toward healthcare for firearm injuries could have been invested in more socially beneficial causes, such as education and mental health care.

This particular paragraph is littered in misinformation and inconsistency in comparable data. In just looking at the numbers presented, the author states "two of three homicides, half of suicides, and a third of all robberies", then immediately states "the total number of handgun deaths from 1980-2006 exceeds 32,000 per year" First, the author probably means "firearms" when stating "handguns" as handguns are the largest portion of firearm deaths, but have never averaged that number per year. For example, the FBI statistics reveal, in 2016, the number of firearm deaths (FBI stats do not include suicides) at 11K, with handguns being 7,100 of that total. Secondly, in going from using

³² "Political Philosophy And The Gun Control Debate: What Would Bentham, Mills, And Nozick Have To Say? – Berkeley Political Review", Bpr.Berkeley.Edu, Last modified 2013, <https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2013/08/05/political-philosophy-and-the-gun-control-debatewhat-would-bentham-mills-and-nozick-have-to-say/>.

fractions to the number 32K, the assumption projected is that they are related- this is not the case. As previously mentioned, the 32K firearm deaths are comprised of roughly 2/3 suicides, 1/3 gun violence deaths, and 1-2% accidental deaths. Thus, the *homicides* by firearm each year are around 8k (3/4 of the 11k gun violence deaths), suicides by firearm are around 22K, and accidental death around 600. In addition, the article's point about robbery is a category of violent crime with a higher gun use rate than others and does not incorporate theft and burglary numbers. The gun use rate in violent crimes, as previously stated, is around 5%. These numbers have been mostly consistent since 2000. The authors use of CDC estimate \$37 billion in cost is also misrepresented. First, the number appears to be from a Huffington Post article, though that article's source is not accessible through the Posts' own sourcing. However, recent CDC estimates do not show numbers according to "firearm related deaths costs to US healthcare system" so that number must have been derived from a percentage or combination of some other totals. The author states it is "taxpayer money" but the CDC study derives its estimated costs from many things, such as work-loss, production lost, and actual medical expenses. Costs associated with tax payer money are actually scarcely included. The recent version of the study notes in its limitations: "Other societal costs, including those associated with law enforcement, prosecution, and corrections, were not considered." The article goes on to claim many other "recent studies" that run counter to larger more widely accepted studies and statistics, such as the Pew study previously referenced. It then attempts a cost-benefit analysis to show a utilitarian method of assessment using the misrepresented "taxpayer money" data while excluding

societal data from gun related benefits such as home defense use, personal defense use, animal population control, and the many retail and recreational industries. For example, the CDC includes the potential work-loss for the probable remaining life span of the deceased - so shouldn't a true costs-benefit also include a "work-saved" calculation for the remaining life of someone saved by a firearm? In short, this article is a perfect representation of the prevailing public argument for more gun control in that it attempts to inflate harm with misinformation while also ignoring benefits. It takes extensive knowledge of the issue to identify the misinformation while also requiring an interest by the reader to find out on their own the extensive pertinent information not included.

Another article illustrates another way the public gun control argument conflates issues to increase the perception of harm from guns. The Atlantic article, *How Gun Rights Harm the Rule of Law - Second Amendment activists are redefining the public sphere, and with it, American democracy*³³. The author brings up the issues of "stand your ground" laws, as well as overuse of lethal force by law enforcement. The author also makes several false claims such as "Gun-rights advocates typically consider themselves staunch conservatives" and then, after initially stating: "Polls show that gun owners cite self-protection as the primary reason they are armed. Their intentions are generally good and admirable" goes on to project the statements of the NRA as the uniform opinion of all gun owners and does not draw a distinction between a gun owner

³³ Firmin DeBrabander, "How Gun Rights Harm The Rule Of Law", The Atlantic, Last modified 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/how-gun-rights-harm-the-rule-of-law/389288/>.

and a “2nd amendment activist”. The latter part is the author’s attempt to create a straw person and can be expected of poor arguments on either side of any issue. The first part, however, is a reasonable concern for society. The issue is not of gun ownership however, it is of the rule of law. It is our responsibility as citizens to address poorly crafted laws or excessive abuse of law enforcement when they exist, the same way we would a traffic law or intersection that may be leading to excessive accidents. This is a chief component in taking responsibility for our rights. Stand your ground laws can be seen as an extension of self-defense in a public or quasi-public setting in that self-defense requires the person defending to retreat if possible, while stand your ground allows the person defending to, in fact, stand their ground and not retreat (and is sometimes called “no duty to retreat”). While the law varies in its language and implementation state to state, the author does seem to overstate the reach of stand your ground but his argument seems to be that this law can *over-empower* some overly aggressive people. The problem with this analysis is that it’s backwards and doesn’t acknowledge that the law applies to any reasonable force, not just guns. The argument is blaming guns for a law that empowers the actions of the individual. It doesn’t matter if the individual acting under a stand your ground law uses a .38, a 12 gauge or a pellet gun in the act (or has 1 or 20 guns in his home). That individual is empowered to act by the law, not by what is in his hand, and may do the same holding a taser or a baseball bat. Based on the stand your ground argument, the article would more aptly be called “How the Rule of Law Harms Gun Rights”. It should be noted, there are currently large

citizen movements to address both stand your ground laws and excessive force by law enforcement.

In the previously mentioned Justice Stevens 2018, NY Times Op-Ed, Justice Stevens reasoning for urging protestors to demand the repeal of the 2nd Amendment is misguided. He states, "Concern that a national standing army might pose a threat to the security of the separate states led to the adoption of that amendment," which is absolutely true. He then states that "Today that concern is a relic of the past," which is close to true, in that it is not something society worries much about. But the concern is not a relic because it exists. The obvious flaw in his reasoning is the correlation between the two statements: Society does not worry much about a national standing army posing a threat today precisely because we have the 2nd Amendment. It would be like Justice Stephens standing under an umbrella in the rain for a very long time, then arguing that no one needs an umbrella in the rain because he's not currently getting wet. It seems Justice Stephens has been standing under the umbrella so long he forgets its purpose. Another important element to the article is a picture just below the article's title. The picture shows an 18th century musket and a modern rifle replete with accessories under which the caption reads, "A musket from the 18th century, when the Second Amendment was written, and an assault rifle of today." This picture is misleading in that it does not state the type of rifle, but does call it an "assault rifle". Though the term is thrown around, the only real definition of assault rifle is a rifle with automatic capabilities, thus making the rifle illegal for civilians. This would make the

attempted analogy incorrect as the musket would be available to citizens and any “assault rifle” of today would not be. Also, the picture is attempting to portray the weapon as intimidating, however the accessories depicted are similar to having stripes, rims, fuzzy dice and a spoiler on a sports car and are available for many different rifles. It is undeniable, however, that a modern rifle, regardless of type or caliber, would be more accurate and can fire rounds at a higher rate of speed than the musket. Neither point was made in the caption or by the article.

As these few terms are used in the gun discussions, I believe it is important to address the term “assault weapon” as well as what an AR-15 and AK-47 are. The most prevalent misinformation, in my opinion, in the entire discussion around guns is the term “assault weapon”. It is misinformation because it is a term used as the basis of many discussions surrounding guns and violence, yet there is not a true definition of the term and as that fact is being pointed out more and more, the term is being amended to “assault-style weapons” which is an even more vague term. An assault rifle, as earlier noted, is an actual term used by the military to denote an automatic rifle or a rifle with automatic capabilities (typically the ability to switch from semi-auto to auto). Automatic rifles have been illegal for the general public since the late 1930’s, as well as short-barreled (18in or less), often called “sawed off”, rifles and shotguns. The word *weapon* can of course mean many things that are not guns and thus creates an extremely vague term in the realm of guns. Attach the word *weapon* to *assault* and it creates an extremely vague term that still carries an association to automatic rifles. The one constant in the

many definitions of the term assault weapon, is that the term includes some semi-automatic rifles. No definition includes all semi-automatics rifles and some definitions include some semi-automatic pistols. A common element to the definition is that the semi-auto must have the ability to hold an accessory, some definitions say two or more. There are also other definitions that require other elements such as clip capacity. Very few definitions address bullet caliber and none a uniformity to that purpose. In short, the term *assault weapon* is not a real term, but a concept used to draw out the audience's imagination in important discussions that should require concrete terminology.

A similar tactic is being used by pundits and politicians, such as Congressman O'Rourke, with the use of AR-15 and AK-47. Both AR-15s and AK-47's are types of rifles with very different capabilities and histories, yet appear similar in label. There is a misconception that AR mean "assault rifle". The A in AR-15 is the manufacturer name Armalite, the R stands for rifle, and the 15 is its model number – Armalite Rifle model 15. An AR-15 holds a relatively weak caliber bullet (.223), but the manufacturer, Armalite, made this model very easy to change parts and accessorize, often times making it appear intimidating. Its only significant capability over other rifles is its good long-range capabilities. The AK-47 in its original form, is a fully automatic Russian-made assault rifle. The AK stands for "Avtomat Kalashnikov" and the 47 is the year it was invented, 1947. The word "Avtomat" is Russian for "automatic" and "Kalashnikova" is the last name of the inventor. In its original form, the AK-47 is illegal in the United States, as it is automatic. In recent decades the manufacturer has made semi-automatic models in

order to sell in the US. The AK-47 fires a 7.62x39mm round, which is roughly one third larger than the AR-15- a significant difference. These two rifles are very different in design, use, history and type, yet are often lumped together by gun control proponents to convolute the discussion. It is my belief they are both used together for this reason: Many people know the AK-47, as it is the most popular firearm on the planet and is used in countless movies almost always in its automatic form. The AR-15, with it's many accessories, can appear intimidating to the casual observer. Few people are aware that any AK-47 in the US would not be the same weapon they have seen in the movies, but a semi-automatic version of a fairly powerful rifle. Also, few people are aware of the details of the AR-15. In addition, they both happen to have a two letter – two number title. This convolution can easily lead a casual observer of a discussion involving guns to use their imagination to fill in the gaps they don't know about each gun with what they know of the other.

A consistent plea being made by gun control advocates is for “sensible gun legislation” to be enacted to combat gun violence in the United States. The only gun legislation being discussed and with the support of major elected officials is the previously mentioned Assault Weapons Ban 2019, sponsored by Senator Diane Feinstein. It was first introduced in 2012 and had the vocal support of President Obama. This legislation is based on the Assault Weapons Ban (1994) that was law from 1994-2004. As mentioned, the 1994 law was allowed to expire by its own provisions because it had many loopholes and showed few signs it may have reduced gun violence. In an aptly named 2012 Washington Post article, *Everything you need to know about the*

assault weapons ban in one post, Brad Plumer explains the 2012 Feinstein proposed bill as well as the 1994 law³⁴. Plumber explains how the 1994 law was effective in reducing the sale of high capacity clips for semi-automatic weapons and while mass shooting did decrease overall during that span, the Columbine shooting took place in the middle of it (1999) as a part of an extreme one year spike, which also illustrates his point that the statistic is difficult to gauge since they are so rare. He also points out that overall gun crime did not reduce, as rifles are used in less than 10% of crimes. This point is also important to note because handguns are by far the dominant firearm used in firearm related crime and in self-defense. The largest issues many gun rights proponents have with the 2012 and 2019 bans proposed by Senator Feinstein are that the definition of “assault weapon” is even more restrictive, involves some semi-automatic pistols and is at least as arbitrary as the 1994 legislations controversial definition in that the definitions are largely based on the guns accessories and appearance, thus making illegal some guns that have similar or equal capabilities as guns that would remain legal. There is also vague criteria for an American citizen to be added to the Terrorist Watchlist. It is important to note that the bill is not law and only a proposal and may have many changes if a version is ever voted on.

The issue of gun ownership and gun violence is more difficult to discuss because of the prevalence of misinformation, partial information, and the convolution of terms

³⁴ Brad Plumer, "Everything You Need To Know About The Assault Weapons Ban, In One Post", Washingtonpost.com, Last modified 2012, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2012/12/17/everything-you-need-to-know-about-banning-assault-weapons-in-one-post/>.

such as, gun related deaths and homicide rate, as well as broad or differing definitions of terms like mass shooting or school shooting. In addition, it is difficult to see the issue objectively when faced with images and stories about a mass shooting. It is difficult to see the choices and actions of the shooter when focusing attention on what gun type was used. For example, the Nice attacker used a vehicle to crash into people killing 86 and the public asks “Who is this crazy person in the truck?” In the instance of a shooter, the media immediately asks, “What kind of gun was used?” and does not focus on the individual and their actions. Lastly, the benefits of gun ownership are rarely discussed or broadcast publicly. As previously mentioned, most people are not aware of the number of guns they are around in a day or if their neighbors are gun owning households. There is no measurement for the number of criminals that temper their crimes for fear of an armed victim or do not pursue a criminal opportunity because the potential for a victim to have a firearm is so high. Very few people are aware that guns are used daily in home-defense cases – even the lowest estimates (400k annually) equate to over 1000 per day.

A CONSIDERATION FOR COMPROMISE

Professor Hugh LaFollete in, *Gun Control*³⁵, offers a fair argument illustrating “a range of alternatives” available in the argument surrounding gun control. He points out how most discussions oversimplify the choices and states there are basically two

³⁵ Hugh LaFollette, In Defense of Gun Control. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

opposing scales that are to be considered. One concerns guns and to what extent they should be abolished – no abolition, moderate abolition, or absolute abolition. The second concerns the restriction on guns available to private citizens – absolute restriction, moderate restriction, and no restriction. While this does oversimplify the debate, his point is that the debate is multifaceted and he states, “So our choice is not merely to support or oppose gun control but to decide who can own which guns under what conditions.” His argument is also aimed more at handgun use than guns in general. He is correct in doing so as handgun ownership is not nearly as high as long gun ownership, yet is responsible for far more person to person use, both as crime and defense. This is in stark contrast to the Assault Weapons Bans that scarcely address handguns, if at all.

LaFollette begins by acknowledging Americans Constitutional right but asks if people have a moral right to bear arms. He believes “Advocates must show that and how granting the right protects individuals’ fundamental interests, and they must be prepared to respond to objections that granting that right type will harm society” He then states:

Other fundamental interests are necessary to one flourishing no matter what her particular desires, interests, and beliefs. It is difficult to see how this is true of guns. Moreover, the interests protected by paradigmatic rights-our interests in unfettered speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of association-are not merely means to my flourishing, they are elements constituting it.

It is a bit odd that LaFollette mentions the Constitution first and asks advocates to show “how granting the right protects individuals’ fundamental interests”, then does not see that the Founding Fathers specifically put the 2nd amendment into the Constitution to

insure the people had a means of protecting their “flourishing” rights (which his list is synonymous with US Constitutional rights) with the right to bear arms. That aside, he is also asking gun advocates to “respond to objections that granting that right type will harm society”. As this discussion has shown, and will continue to show, while there are harms inherent in having guns in society, the benefits far exceed them. LaFollette even introduces home defense statistics that state 600K defensive uses per year, but then goes on to state they are from a limited sample size and inflated. As previously shown in this discussion, there are at least 4 surveys conducted in multiple decades and by different institutions both public and private that put the low-end estimate on defensive gun uses per year between 400-600K. I agree with LaFollette that the high-end estimates of his source’s survey as well as the high-end of this discussion’s sources, ranging from a million to 2.5 million per year, are unrealistic.

LaFollette also claims “Guns, unlike autos, are inherently dangerous...” and states “...we can sensibly say that the automobile is not inherently dangerous despite the fact that it causes harm. We cannot say the same for guns.” As this discussion has shown, the analogy of guns and automobiles is a good one, and that we as society, and LaFollette agrees, do not consider the 38K deaths and over 3 million injuries a year too much harm for the benefit of transportation. Then LaFollette, states “we should still not seek to substantially limit private ownership of guns unless we had good reason to think that would prevent serious harm” must believe the 15K gun deaths -only 11k of which are homicides- and roughly 60K violent crimes involving guns- 5% of total violent crimes- annually is too much harm weighed against the 400K+ home defense uses and other

benefits shown in this discussion. He does differentiate gun and auto harm by claiming guns are “inherently” dangerous while autos are not, but considering the numbers of each, automobile use appears more dangerous, thus his argument for “inherently dangerous” is flawed or autos should fall under its purview on data alone.

LaFollette also states a “strong correlation between the presence of guns and a higher murder rate is compelling.” He goes on to compare Europe and America and cites a difference is “widespread presence of guns [in America]” and also states “an extraordinarily high murder rate in America.” Once again, as this discussion has shown, faulty reasoning comes from faulty premises. According to the UN data, America does not have a high murder rate as the murder rate is actually under the world average.

LaFollette’s comparison of America and Europe also ignores the fact that South and Central America’s murder rate is far higher than Americas and the rest of the world while their firearm ownership rate is among the lowest in the world. What LaFollette and countless others are misstating in the use of this data is that Europe has a very low murder rate, regardless of type, compared to the rest of the world. Thus, comparing any murder statistic to only Europe will yield the same misleading result. If we compare US gun ownership and murder rates to only South or Central America, the US would appear a safe haven where more guns unequivocally equal less crime. If we compare Europe to South and Central America in gun ownership and murder rates, we see gun ownership cannot have anything to do with murder rate as both have low gun ownership and inverse murder rates.

While I disagree with much of his analysis and premises LaFollette's main point is still admirable. LaFollette wants to find a middle ground on guns in an attempt to reduce violence and he concludes by offering some compromises. The first, is a very poor analogy to the regulation of dynamite and the many restrictions to purchase, use and storage, and who can own it. He does pull from that analogy his second compromise, that the owner of dynamite is financially liable for harm caused by it. While the analogy is still a bit of a stretch the concept of a gun owner being liable for their guns use can be reasonable in specific instances. The idea of a gun owner being responsible for their gun being used outside the home by a minor child is not unreasonable. There may be other specific instances that could work and may lead to LaFollette's aim of, "those owning guns would likely take greater care in storing, handling, and using them." His third compromise is also not good and also illustrates a fundamental problem in his perspective on the issue. Continuing on the potential costs to a gun owner inherent in his second compromise, he adds the idea of liability insurance, and states, "We could let gun owners purchase liability insurance to cover potential losses. We might even require them to purchase insurance. After all, most states require drivers to have automobile insurance." Requiring by law someone to purchase anything, much less insurance, for merely owning something violates the US Commerce Clause. The analogy to automobiles is also false because insurance is only required of a driver if the automobile is on public roads. An automobile on private property needs no insurance or permitting - it is the use of public roads with the automobile that requires insurance. LaFollette's perspective throughout article comes from that of a paternalistic

government, not a democratic one. In addition, even as his argument and aim is fair his conclusions (compromises) are weak. They are weak because his premises are largely based on false or inflated data that understates benefits while attempting to inflate harm by parsing fragments of the issue in isolation. His middle ground does not line up because his premises start him in the wrong place. Nevertheless, LaFollette is earnestly trying to create a compromise and reduce potential gun violence crime. In that nature I will attempt the same by putting forth accurate and pertinent data on the subject, apply the utilitarian structure, then conclude with my own take on how efforts may reasonably be employed based on data.

THE HARM OF GUN VIOLENCE

Though the vast majority of guns are rarely or never seen in public, gun violence is heavily reported and a very real and dangerous element of society. According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)³⁶, there were 11,004 homicides by a firearm in 2016, the vast majority with handguns. On April 20th 1999, the school shooting at Columbine Highschool shook the nation.

Two teens went on a shooting spree on April 20, 1999, killing 13 people and wounding more than 20 others before turning their guns on themselves and committing suicide. The Columbine shooting was, at the time, the worst high school shooting in U.S. history and prompted a national debate on gun control and school safety.³⁷

³⁶ "Crime In The United States 2016 - Expanded Homicide Data Table 4", FBI.Gov, Last modified 2016, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-4.xls>.

³⁷ "Columbine Shooting", HISTORY.Com, Last modified 2009, <https://www.history.com/topics/1990s/columbine-high-school-shootings>.

After Columbine, police and officials initiated protocols for “Active Shooters” and schools began to initiate lockdown drills as defense responses for students and faculty. While the Columbine shooting sparked fear, outrage, and response, it was nowhere near the first school shooting in America. The website K12academics.com, lists the history of American school shootings starting with the earliest in 1764:

The earliest known United States shooting to happen on school property was the Pontiac's Rebellion school massacre on July 26, 1764, where four Lenape American Indians entered the schoolhouse near present-day Greencastle, Pennsylvania, shot and killed schoolmaster Enoch Brown, and killed nine or ten children (reports vary). Only two children survived.³⁸

There were 11 school shootings listed in the 1800's as well as the first mass shooting involving students:

The first known mass shooting in the U.S. where students were shot, was on April 9, 1891, when 70-year-old, James Foster fired a shotgun at a group of students in the playground of St. Mary's Parochial School, Newburgh, New York, causing minor injuries to several of the students. The majority of attacks during this time period by students on other students or teacher, usually involved stabbing with knives, or hitting with stones.

In 2012 America saw a shooting even more horrific than Columbine, but with ties to it.

A 20-year-old boy with untreated Asperger's, shot his way into Sandy Hook Elementary School and killed 20 children and 6 adults. The official investigation revealed many disturbing things about the shooter, including: “The report notes that (the shooter) had compiled a spreadsheet recording mass murders over the years, giving information on each event. He had a particular fixation with the Columbine high school tragedy of April 1999...”³⁹ This information is consistent with much modern psychological data that

³⁸ "History Of School Shootings In The United States", K12academics.Com, Last modified 2019, <https://www.k12academics.com/school-shootings/history-school-shootings-united-states>.

³⁹ Ed Pilkington, "Sandy Hook Report – Shooter Adam Lanza Was Obsessed With Mass Murder", The Guardian, Last modified 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/25/sandy-hook-shooter-adam-landa-report>.

suggests mass shooters are very aware of and follow other shooters attacks, methods and death tolls. The Sandy Hook attack was also one of the few mass school shootings in modern history that took place at an Elementary School, rather than a High School or Middle School.

In addition to school shootings, the United States has seen public mass shootings as well. The website GunViolenceArchive.com has kept up to the day stats on gun violence since 2013. The website's Mission Statement reads:

Gun Violence Archive (GVA) is a not for profit corporation formed in 2013 to provide free online public access to accurate information about gun-related violence in the United States. GVA will collect and check for accuracy, comprehensive information about gun-related violence in the U.S. and then post and disseminate it online.⁴⁰

Of the mass shooting statistics, GVA cites 340 mass shootings in 2018 and 346 in 2017, but does not list number of deaths associated with the shootings nor give a definition of mass shooting.

One of the more recent and most horrific mass shootings was the Vegas shooting on Oct 1st, 2017 where a 64-year-old man inexplicably set up a cache of weapons in the Mandalay Bay Hotel room that looked out over an outdoor concert across the street. Over an 11-minute span the shooter killed 58 people and wounded around 1000. After the shooting, police found explosives and 23 rifles of various models, most of which were semi-automatic, modified to fire as rapidly as possible. While surveillance cameras showed it took the shooter a week to transport the weapons to the hotel room and he

⁴⁰ "Past Summary Ledgers | Gun Violence Archive", Gunviolencearchive.Org, Last modified 2019, <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>.

had to shatter the room's window with a special device, the final FBI investigation concluded the shooter had no motive.^{41 42}

To understand gun death numbers broadly, listed below are the gun death statistics by the FBI UCR for gun related homicides 2012-2016 and the total deaths by gun from 2014 to 2018 according to the Gun Violence Archive. Note that the homicides are included in gun deaths, but gun deaths DO NOT include suicides:

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Homicides (FBI)	8,897	8,545	8,312	9,776	11,004	N/A	N/A
Gun Deaths (GVA)	N/A	N/A	12,464	13,528	15,100	15,660	14,726

In addition to deaths, there are also violent and non-violent crime statistics to consider. According to the FBI there were around 1.25 million violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) committed in 2016, and the GVA states there were officially 58,970 incidents involving gun violence. Roughly 5% of the total violent crimes involved a gun.

⁴¹ Alex Horton, "The Las Vegas Shooter Modified A Dozen Rifles To Shoot Like Automatic Weapons", Washingtonpost.Com, Last modified 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/10/02/video-from-las-vegas-suggests-automatic-gunfire-heres-what-makes-machine-guns-different/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c93670d79165.

⁴² Vanessa Romo, "NPR Choice Page", Npr.Org, Last modified 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/29/689821599/fbi-finds-no-motive-in-las-vegas-shooting-closes-investigation>.

Another important argument to consider is the level of modern gun ownership and the capabilities of guns today. The Atlantic author, Andrew Exum, illustrates in his article *America's Gun-Culture Problem*,⁴³ that while he is not opposed to gun ownership or the 2nd Amendment, he sees a problem with how the gun ownership culture in America has changed, especially after 9/11. He writes:

But after the September 11 attacks, I spent several years at war and then lived abroad as a civilian for another several years. And when I finally returned to the United States in late 2008, I noticed something different about the gun culture in the country to which I was so eager to return. For one, driving with my mother from our home in East Tennessee to Nashville, I noticed how many billboards on the side of the highway advertised guns. And not just any guns—these were not .30-06 hunting rifles or shotguns, but rather, the kind of tactical firearms, including assault rifles, that I had carried in Iraq and Afghanistan. Why in the world, I thought then, would anyone have a need for such weapons?

At the time, I wrote a lot of what I saw off to canny gun manufacturers preying on the irrational fears among my fellow white Tennesseans of the liberal black president America had just elected. And I'm sure that does explain a lot of it. But as my friend C.J. Chivers and others have pointed out, a bigger shift is in play: The 2004 expiration of the 1994 ban on assault weapons and the post-9/11 infatuation with so-called "tactical" weaponry have combined to drive sales in the kinds of weapons that would have appeared frankly insane for the individual gun owner just a few years earlier.

He goes on to claim that many military and former military personnel find the gun culture today to be more intense and that the gun manufacturers and gun rights organizations have used backlash to sell more guns and push for more "assault rifle" style guns. He also points out how gun ownership is being sold as a patriotic duty and a snub to the gun-control lobby. He concludes: "But if America wants to reduce gun deaths and preserve gun rights for future generations, it needs to reverse the cultural shifts in attitudes toward small arms that have taken root in the past 20 years." This is an important argument because it is not advocating for any change in the laws

⁴³ Andrew Exum, "America's Gun-Culture Problem", The Atlantic, Last modified 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/03/american-gun-culture/554870/>.

pertaining to gun ownership, but rather is showing the change in some citizens' attitudes towards guns. Exum is advocating for citizen responsibility as well as showing how aggressive the gun sales industry has been advertising in the wake of the current wave of gun control advocacy. It is also accurate to state that, as a percent of the population, the number of guns owned in the US has increased since 2008, though gun violence numbers have not. One component to consider is that manufacturing technology has advanced a great deal in the past two decades, making firearms, firearm accessories, and many other products more affordable.

Another key point to note is that while the guns citizens own have increased in size and capacity, so have the weapons and tools of law enforcement. Many argue law enforcement has militarized in recent decades, causing concerns about increased aggression and abuse of power. The purpose of the 2nd Amendment is not to ensure the rights of recreational hunters, but to create the last line of defense against a tyrannical government. It could be argued that this is still evidence of a gun culture problem and that the law enforcement and public's increase in gun quantity and capacity is an unnecessary arms race that could eventually lead to increased violence, though current statistics do not support that argument. With all of these deaths and terrible events involving guns, how can society justify private gun ownership? What benefits would tip the utilitarian scale and outweigh the harms?

THE BENEFITS OF GUN OWNERSHIP

Over the decades the United States and the United Nations, as well as other countries and organizations, have kept statistics on gun defense as well as violence. In 2013, President Obama issued a memorandum that stated: "The Secretary of Health and Human Services, through the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other scientific agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, shall conduct or sponsor research into the causes of gun violence and the ways to prevent it."⁴⁴ The study found that there were roughly 500K incidents a year of defensive uses of firearms by victims. It also stated that the estimate could range up to 3 million. "A 1994 survey conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that Americans use guns to frighten away intruders who are breaking into their homes about 498,000 times per year" The survey data was extrapolated from data of 5,238 telephone interviews. The study also estimated over 1.8 million instances in which a firearm was retrieved but no intruder was seen.

The website *JustFact.com/guncontrol*, an excerpt states:

A 1993 nationwide survey of 4,977 households found that over the previous five years, at least 0.5% of households had members who had used a gun for defense during a situation in which they thought someone "almost certainly would have been killed" if they "had not used a gun for protection." This amounted to 162,000 such incidents per year. This excludes all "military service, police work, or work as a security guard."⁴⁵

The source of this excerpt is from a 1995 article in the Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology. The article explains several studies related to Defensive Gun Uses (DGUs),

⁴⁴ Barack Obama, "Presidential Memorandum -- Engaging In Public Health Research On The Causes And Prevention Of Gun Violence", Whitehouse.Gov, Last modified 2013, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/16/presidential-memorandum-engaging-public-health-research-causes-and-pre-0>.

⁴⁵ James D. Agresti, Reid K. Smith and Rebecca Guerra, "Gun Control Facts," Just Facts, last modified February 23, 2018, www.justfacts.com/guncontrol.asp.

the results of those studies, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. It also acknowledges the difficulty in conducting such studies and illustrates why they were not conducted until somewhat recently. The article does find two studies more plausible than the rest and states:

Nevertheless, among these imperfect surveys, two were relatively good for present purposes. Both the Hart survey in 1981 and the Mauser survey in 1990 were national surveys which asked carefully worded questions directed at all Rs in their samples. Both surveys excluded uses against animals and occupational uses. The two also nicely complemented each other in that the Hart survey asked only about uses of handguns, while the Mauser survey asked about uses of all gun types. The Hart survey results implied a minimum of about 640,000 annual DGUs involving handguns, while the Mauser results implied about 700,000 involving any type of gun*. It should be stressed, contrary to the claims of Reiss and Roth*, that neither of these estimates entailed the use of "dubious adjustment procedures".

The percent of sample households reporting a DGU was simply multiplied by the total number of U.S. households, resulting in an estimate of DGU-involved households. This figure, compiled for a five-year period, was then divided by five to yield a per-year figure.⁴⁶

This article further illustrates that the estimated 500K number of gun defense uses annually by Americans is either accurate or low.

An important component missing from statistics on gun defense are the number of crimes not committed for fear of victim defense with a firearm. It is immeasurable, but one must consider how many would-be criminals do not commit crimes for fear of firearms and/or commit less heinous crimes for the same reason. For example, a criminal may stick to petty theft rather than burglary when they know a potential victim or home owner may have a firearm. As previously stated, the Pew Study found 41% of U.S. households are "gun-owning" households – that's roughly 4 of every 10 houses. A would-be criminal breaking into a random home for whatever nefarious purpose would

⁴⁶ Gary Kleck and Marc Gertz, "Armed Resistance To Crime: The Prevalence And Nature Of Self-Defense With A Gun", *The Journal Of Criminal Law And Criminology* (1973-) 86, no. 1 (1995): 150, doi:10.2307/1144004, 158.

have up to a 40% chance of being confronted with a gun and/or shot. Russian Roulette gives better odds.

While multiple studies show guns are responsible for *at least* 400K defensive uses per year and serve to deter or temper the potential actions of countless criminals and would-be criminals, there are actually many more benefits of guns. Two of the major reasons there are so many guns owned by Americans are, one, they are used to hunt recreationally, and two, they are collected for leisure and aesthetic purposes. Take for example, an avid hunter in Texas that enjoys hunting both birds and deer. This is a very common hunter and hunters like this would own similar equipment and guns, have taken a hunter safety course and purchased a hunting license. In order to facilitate this hobby this kind of hunter would typically own at least 4 different guns, most likely around 6-8 guns, and go hunting 2-10 times year. They would own a shot gun for the birds – most likely a 12 gauge – but could own several shot guns for different bird types and challenges. They would own a rifle for the deer – a .270, 30.06, or similar size rifle – but could own many more depending upon their hunting preferences. In addition, any hunter that goes into the forest would have an easily accessible pistol called a “sidearm” with them to deal with any potential danger nature may have in store such as a rattlesnake or wild hog. It can also serve as an emergency alarm to anyone nearby. The fourth gun an avid hunter would most likely own would be at home, for their spouse, family, roommate, etc., to keep as a home-defense weapon. The “sidearm” would typically be the primary home-defense gun, but when out hunting there must be a replacement at home and if you go hunting at least once a year leaving someone at

home, this must be taken into account. Considering this would be a hobby for at least one person in the household, the likelihood of having multiple shot guns or rifles, acquired over time, is very high and thus the likely number of guns owned by an avid hunter is 6-8 and could easily be more. In owning these guns and being a hunter, this person would have an array of knowledge about nature and weather in the locale(s) they are hunting, their equipment (which can be extensive), the laws pertaining to their hunt, and the guns used. A person that has gone to this much trouble to learn and this much risk and expense to partake in hunting, would certainly have to enjoy what they are doing. This can also be said of the collector, who would most likely own many more guns than the hunter and may also be a hunter. A gun collector appreciates firearms the same way a musician may collect instruments or a “Gear Head” may collect cars or have a car that they put an exorbitant amount of money into. In addition, the gun collector may not even own ammunition for many of the guns they own. Considering the statistics on hunting accidents ⁴⁷, the hunter is participating in one of the safest sports in the United States, and if this person also has their Concealed Carry License (CCL), they are among the safest and most law-abiding demographic for both gun violence and crime in general in the United States.

The benefit of recreational use is an immense component in gun ownership and gun rights and also helps explain many gun statistics. For perspective, there were over 36 million hunting licenses sold in the US in 2017 (Texas having the most of any state at

⁴⁷ *Texas Hunting Incident Analysis* Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 2018.

1.7 M) and that number has been steady for many years.⁴⁸ That's roughly 6-7% of the US population. Considering the gun ownership statistics previously mentioned in this argument and the perspective on the number of guns owned by hunters and gun collectors, it is easy to see that the estimates of the Pew Study, as well as the estimates that about 3% of gun owners own about 50% of all guns, while another article estimates that 5% of gun owners own 65% of all guns, is not only likely accurate, but likely comprised of mostly avid hunters and gun collectors. The recreational aspect of gun ownership is a large benefit to many citizens and also helps explain the immense number of guns owned by US citizens. One more beneficial component to hunting is the revenue generated to help both the environment and hunter education and safety. In 1937 the Pittman-Robertson Act was passed. Now known as Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration, the revenues generated from these excise taxes are apportioned to state wildlife agencies for their conservation efforts, hunter education programs, and operation of shooting ranges. Since it was passed over \$7 billion have been collected and made available to states.

APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

When you purchase a gun, you are making a choice to be a gun owner. The way you store, carry, and use your gun are your actions. You can be a responsible gun

⁴⁸ S Lock, "Number Of Hunting Licenses And Permits In The U.S. 2017 | Statista", Statista, Last modified 2017, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/253615/number-of-hunting-licenses-and-permits-in-the-us/>.

owner, or a careless gun owner, or anything in-between. You can keep your gun in a safe and accessible place at home for home-defense, you can carry it in a case in your trunk on the way to a hunting trip, you can shoot your neighbor's dog one night for barking too much, and anything in-between. As a society we recognize the potential of gun ownership and have come up with and agreed to laws and regulations pertaining to who can own a gun, what guns are available to the public, where guns can be carried by non-law enforcement, and others. These rules are in place to do what can be done to make society as safe as possible. The rules discourage the harmful ways a person can use a gun. When anyone intimidates, hurts, or kills another person with a gun, it is the actions of the perpetrator as a result of their choices that created the harm, not the weapon used. The harms of gun violence are very real, but the benefit of gun ownership far exceeds them.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has allowed us to offer fresh insights into what we are about as a society as we discuss the place of guns in our lives. We have learned that key to evaluating our practices is a network of concepts involving freedom, power, and responsibility and that, as we applied them, we were led to consider how ability, choice, actions, and disincentives to do harm are called into play. We identified this framework as utilitarian in nature and set out to apply it, as well as a modified utilitarian analysis, using benefits and harm, to an evaluation of the Internet, automobiles, and guns. In the case of guns, we drew attention to a major impediment to an intelligent application of our framework and a utilitarian analysis, namely, public opinion that has served to

obfuscate society's evaluation of the place of guns in society. We identified the elements of this misleading force and sought clarity for an enlightened utilitarian analysis of guns.

In closing, it is my belief that the current laws and regulations in place pertaining to gun control are reasonable and effective, but with any issue involving harm it is our responsibly as citizens to combat any harm we can without sacrificing our freedom. By viewing gun control based on the facts and ignoring undue pressure by public opinion, we can apply the utilitarian structure to this issue the way we do to other non-controversial issues in order to make sound judgements in the best interest of the greater good. This discussion has focused on misinformation but there are areas that the data shows can be improved upon. We must educate our youth on guns once they reach a responsible age as violent gun use is highest amongst young men. We must address the recidivism rate of violent gun users as this rate is also high. We must hold our own government accountable for the lax implementation of current background checks and we must be vigilant and aware of our own circle of friends and family that may be needing help. We must also understand that a change to gun culture and the way we view guns can be helpful without a change to gun laws. It is our responsibility to help each other so that we may individually make good decisions that benefit the greater good.

APPENDIX SECTION

NATIONAL STATISTICS							
	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
POLICE-REPORTED MOTOR VEHICLE TRAFFIC CRASHES							
Fatal	34,439	32,539	30,056	30,202	31,006	29,867	30,296
Injury	2,177,000	1,715,000	1,648,000	1,591,000	1,634,000	1,530,000	1,542,000
Property-Damage-Only	5,065,000	4,548,000	4,387,000	4,066,000	3,950,000	3,778,000	3,847,000
Total	7,277,000	6,296,000	6,064,000	5,687,000	5,615,000	5,338,000	5,419,000
TRAFFIC CRASH VICTIMS: FATALITIES							
Occupants	25,096	23,897	22,307	22,483	23,017	22,510	23,371
Drivers	18,610	17,613	16,470	16,520	16,838	16,474	16,864
Passengers	6,407	6,213	5,766	5,896	6,106	5,972	6,451
Unknown	79	71	71	67	73	64	56
Motorcyclists	5,286	5,029	4,594	4,692	4,986	4,630	4,518
Nonoccupants	7,079	6,559	5,843	5,718	5,779	5,339	5,110
Pedestrians	5,987	5,495	4,910	4,779	4,818	4,457	4,302
Pedalcyclists	840	829	729	749	734	682	623
Other/Unknown	252	235	204	190	227	200	185
Total	37,461	35,485	32,744	32,893	33,782	32,479	32,999
TRAFFIC CRASH VICTIMS: INJURED							
Occupants	2,878,000	2,230,000	2,121,000	2,099,000	2,134,000	2,010,000	2,027,000
Drivers	2,067,000	1,605,000	1,534,000	1,450,000	1,489,000	1,416,000	1,431,000
Passengers	810,000	624,000	597,000	648,000	644,000	593,000	596,000
Unknown	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Motorcyclists	105,000	88,000	92,000	88,000	93,000	81,000	82,000
Nonoccupants	161,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	136,000	126,000	130,000
Pedestrians	85,000	70,000	65,000	66,000	76,000	69,000	70,000
Pedalcyclists	60,000	45,000	50,000	48,000	49,000	48,000	52,000
Other/Unknown	15,000	10,000	10,000	11,000	10,000	9,000	8,000
Total	3,144,000	2,443,000	2,338,000	2,313,000	2,362,000	2,217,000	2,239,000
OTHER NATIONAL STATISTICS							
Vehicle Miles Traveled (Millions)	3,174,408	3,095,373	3,025,656	2,988,280	2,969,433	2,950,402	2,967,266
Resident Population	323,127,513	320,896,618	318,563,456	316,204,908	313,998,379	311,663,358	309,348,193
Registered Vehicles	288,033,900	281,312,446	274,804,904	269,294,302	265,647,194	265,043,362	257,312,235
Licensed Drivers	221,711,918	218,084,465	214,092,472	212,159,728	211,814,830	211,874,649	210,114,939
NATIONAL RATES: FATALITIES							
Fatalities per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled	1.18	1.15	1.08	1.10	1.14	1.10	1.11
Fatalities per 100,000 Population	11.59	11.06	10.28	10.40	10.76	10.42	10.67
Fatalities per 100,000 Registered Vehicles	13.01	12.61	11.92	12.21	12.72	12.25	12.82
Fatalities per 100,000 Licensed Drivers	16.90	16.27	15.29	15.50	15.95	15.33	15.71
NATIONAL RATES: INJURED PERSONS							
Injured Persons per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled	99	79	77	77	80	75	75
Injured Persons per 100,000 Population	973	761	734	731	752	711	724
Injured Persons per 100,000 Registered Vehicles	1,091	869	851	859	889	836	870
Injured Persons per 100,000 Licensed Drivers	1,418	1,120	1,092	1,090	1,115	1,046	1,066
*Estimate less than 500.							
Sources: Crashes, Fatalities, Injured, and Costs - National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.							
Population - U.S. Bureau of the Census.							
Vehicle Miles Traveled - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).							
Registered Vehicles - FHWA and Polk data from R.L. Polk & Co., a foundation of IHS Markit automotive solutions.							
IMPORTANT: NHTSA redesigned the nationally representative sample of police-reported traffic crashes, which estimates the number of police-reported injury and property-damage-only crashes. The new system, Crash Report Sampling System (CRSS), replaced the National Automotive Sampling System (NASS GES) in 2016 and has a different sample design. Thus, the 2016 estimates from CRSS are not comparable to 2015 and earlier year estimates from NASS GES.							
Traffic Safety Facts Annual Report, 7/03/2018							

REFERENCES

"1 In 3 Gofundme Campaigns Is For Medical Bills, CEO Says". Advisory.Com, Last modified 2018. <https://www.advisory.com/daily-briefing/2018/07/10/gofundme>.

American Psychological Association Resolution On Firearm Violence Research And Prevention. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2014.

Borger, Julian, and Ewen MacAskill. "Truck Attacks In Berlin And Nice Reflect Change In Islamic State Tactics". The Guardian, Last modified 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/20/truck-attacks-in-berlin-and-nice-reflect-change-in-isis-tactics>.

"Columbine Shooting". HISTORY.Com, Last modified 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/1990s/columbine-high-school-shootings>.

"Crime In The United States 2016 - Expanded Homicide Data Table 4". FBI.Gov, Last modified 2016. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-4.xls>.

DeBrabander, Firmin. "How Gun Rights Harm The Rule Of Law". The Atlantic, Last modified 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/how-gun-rights-harm-the-rule-of-law/389288/>.

Exum, Andrew. "America's Gun-Culture Problem". The Atlantic, Last modified 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/03/american-gun-culture/554870/>.

Finn, Jessica. "Former Nurse Charged With Murder Over Brutal Road-Rage Killing". Mail Online, Last modified 2018. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6455779/Former-nurse-charged-murder-brutal-road-rage-killing.html>.

"Firearm Suicide In The United States - Everytownresearch.Org". Everytownresearch.Org, Last modified 2019. <https://everytownresearch.org/firearm-suicide/>.

Gordon, Kyle. "Topic: Internet Usage Worldwide". Www.Statista.Com, Last modified 2019. <https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/>.

Gramlich, John, and Katherine Schaeffer. "7 Facts About Guns In The U.S.". Pew Research Center, Last modified 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/22/facts-about-guns-in-united-states/>.

"Gun Control – Just Facts". Justfacts.Com, Last modified 2019.
<https://www.justfacts.com/guncontrol.asp>.

Hill, Kim, Debra Menk, and Adam Cooper. "Contribution Of The Automotive Industry To The Economies Of All Fifty State And The United States | Center For Automotive Research". Center For Automotive Research, Last modified 2017.
<https://www.cargroup.org/publication/contribution-of-the-automotive-industry-to-the-economies-of-all-fifty-state-and-the-united-states/>.

"History Of School Shootings In The United States". K12academics.Com, Last modified 2019. <https://www.k12academics.com/school-shootings/history-school-shootings-united-states>.

Horton, Alex. "The Las Vegas Shooter Modified A Dozen Rifles To Shoot Like Automatic Weapons". Washingtonpost.Com, Last modified 2017.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/10/02/video-from-las-vegas-suggests-automatic-gunfire-heres-what-makes-machine-guns-different/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.c93670d79165.

"J.J. Watt's Harvey Crowdfunding Effort Raised \$41.6 Million". Philanthropy News Digest (PND), Last modified 2018. <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/j.j.-watt-s-harvey-crowdfunding-effort-raised-41.6-million>.

Kamenetz, Anya. "The School Shootings That Weren't". Npr.Org, Last modified 2018.
<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/08/27/640323347/the-school-shootings-that-werent>.

Kleck, Gary, and Marc Gertz. "Armed Resistance To Crime: The Prevalence And Nature Of Self-Defense With A Gun". The Journal Of Criminal Law And Criminology (1973-) 86, no. 1 (1995): 150. doi:10.2307/1144004.

LaFollette, Hugh. In Defense Of Gun Control. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Lawrence, Jean. "Road Rage Root Cause". Webmd. Accessed 31 October 2019.
<https://www.webmd.com/women/features/root-cause-of-road-rage#1>.

Library, CNN. "Terrorist Attacks By Vehicle Fast Facts". CNN, Last modified 2017.
<https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/03/world/terrorist-attacks-by-vehicle-fast-facts/index.html>.

Lock, S. "Number Of Hunting Licenses And Permits In The U.S. 2017 | Statista". Statista, Last modified 2017. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/253615/number-of-hunting-licenses-and-permits-in-the-us/>.

Matthews, Hailey. "Eharmony Success Rate (7 Surprising Stats)". Datingadvice.Com, Last modified 2016. <https://www.datingadvice.com/online-dating/eharmony-success-rate>.

McKenzie, Brian. Who Drives To Work? Commuting By Automobile In The United States: 2013. Washington, DC: United States Census Bureau, 2015.

Mill, John Stuart. On Liberty. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, INC., 1978.

Obama, Barack. "Presidential Memorandum -- Engaging In Public Health Research On The Causes And Prevention Of Gun Violence". Whitehouse.Gov, Last modified 2013. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/16/presidential-memorandum-engaging-public-health-research-causes-and-pre-0>.

Parker, Kim. "Guns In America: Attitudes And Experiences Of Americans". Pew Research Center'S Social & Demographic Trends Project, Last modified 2017. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/06/22/americas-complex-relationship-with-guns/>.

"Past Summary Ledgers | Gun Violence Archive". Gunviolencearchive.Org, Last modified 2019. <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>.

Pilkington, Ed. "Sandy Hook Report – Shooter Adam Lanza Was Obsessed With Mass Murder". The Guardian, Last modified 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/25/sandy-hook-shooter-adam-landa-report>.

Plumer, Brad. "Everything You Need To Know About The Assault Weapons Ban, In One Post". Washingtonpost.Com, Last modified 2012. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/work/wp/2012/12/17/everything-you-need-to-know-about-banning-assault-weapons-in-one-post/>.

"Political Philosophy And The Gun Control Debate:What Would Bentham, Mills, And Nozick Have To Say? – Berkeley Political Review". Bpr.Berkeley.Edu, Last modified 2013. <https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2013/08/05/political-philosophy-and-the-gun-control-debatewhat-would-bentham-mills-and-nozick-have-to-say/>.

Romo, Vanessa. "NPR Choice Page". Npr.Org, Last modified 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/29/689821599/fbi-finds-no-motive-in-las-vegas-shooting-closes-investigation>.

Russell, Bertrand. History Of Western Philosophy. 10th ed. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964.

Ryan, Camille, and Jamie M. Lewis. "Computer And Internet Use In The United States: 2015.". Census.Gov, Last modified 2017.
<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/acs/acs-37.pdf>.

Safety Administration, National Highway. "School Bus Safety". NHTSA, Last modified 2019. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/school-bus-safety>.

Stevens, John Paul. "Opinion | John Paul Stevens: Repeal The Second Amendment". Nytimes.Com, Last modified 2018.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/opinion/john-paul-stevens-repeal-second-amendment.html>.

Texas Hunting Incident Analysis. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 2018.

Thottam, Isabel. "10 Online Dating Statistics You Should Know (U.S.)". Eharmony.Com, Last modified 2018. <https://www.eharmony.com/online-dating-statistics/>.

Transportation Statistics Annual Report 2017. Washinton, DC: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2017.

Van Sant, Peter. ""48 Hours" Disrupts Alleged Dark Web Hitmen In Potential Murder-For-Hire Plots". Cbsnews.Com, Last modified 2019.
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/48-hours-disrupts-alleged-dark-web-hitmen-in-potential-murder-for-hire-plots/>.

Ward, Alex. "The New York Attack Shows Why Trucks Are Now The Terrorist Weapon Of Choice". Vox, Last modified 2017. <https://www.vox.com/2017/10/31/16587868/new-york-city-attack-truck-october-31>.

Wolak, Janis, Lindsey Evans, Stephanie Nguyen, and Denise A. Hines. "Online Predators: Myth Versus Reality". New England Journal Of Public Policy 25, no. 1 (2013).
<https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/03/health/online-predators-parents-partner/index.html&httpsredir=1&article=1646&context=nejpp>.